

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 147703
ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SIG-02 MMO-04 PRS-01 /018 R

DRAFTED BY AF/P:BARUSSELL:MR
APPROVED BY AF/P:BARUSSELL
AF/S:DPETTERSON

-----082687 250318Z /65

R 241900Z JUN 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS

UNCLAS STATE 147703

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: STEPHEN ROSENFELD ARTICLE ON SOUTH AFRICA -
JUNE 24

1. THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE, ENTITLED "SOUTH AFRICA: TENTATIVE
VOICES OF MODERATION" APPEARED IN THE JUNE 24 WASHINGTON
POST:

THE WHITE MINORITY OF SOUTH AFRICA IS COMMONLY SEEN IN
WASHINGTON AS A NEANDERTHAL, SELF-BLINDED COMMUNITY CON-
STRICTED BY RACISM AND FEAR. BUT A CLOSE LOOK AT SOUTH
AFRICAN PUBLIC LIFE ITSELF SHOWS A COMMUNITY THAT IS
INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THE CRISIS PRODUCED BY ITS OWN UNJUST
AND WRONGHEADED RACIAL POLICIES AND THAT IS STARTING TO
SERIOUSLY EXPLORE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS. THIS GOES FOR THE
AFRIKAANERS IN THE RULING NATIONALIST PARTY AS WELL AS THE
ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN OPPOSITION.

A CASE IN POINT IS THE NATIONAL DEBATE PROVOKED RECENTLY BY
EDUCATION MINISTER PIET KOORNHOF, AN AFRIKAANER WHO IS, IF
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YOU WILL, HIS COUNTRY'S ANDY YOUNG, A "POINT MAN" FOR FRESH
GOVERNMENT THINKING. HE CALLED FOR A SWISS-LIKE CANTONAL
"PLURAL DEMOCRACY" IN WHICH AUTONOMOUS UNITS OF WHITES,
"COLOREDS" (MIXED WHITE AND BLACK), ASIANS AND URBAN BLACKS

(BLACKS NOT IN "HOMELANDS") MIGHT JOIN NATIONALLY IN "CON-
SENSUAL DECISION-MAKING." "CONSENSUS," OF COURSE, IS THE

CONCEPT BY WHICH LIBERAL WHITES IN SOUTH AFRICA INVOKE
DEMOCRACY WITHOUT EMBRACING MAJORITY RULE, THE THOUGHT OF
WHICH PARALYZES EVEN THE MOST LIBERAL AMONG THEM.

THE DEMANDS ALREADY MADE BY NON-WHITE GROUPS IN SOUTH
AFRICA SOAR WELL BEYOND KOORNHOF'S TRIAL BALLOON.

BUT IT IS WHITE REACTION THAT IS TRULY FASCINATING - FOR
ITS SUGGESTION OF POLITICAL VIGOR AMONG THE RULING ELITE.

THE STAR, AN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PAPER CRITICAL OF THE GOVERN-
MENT, RAPPED PRIME MINISTER JOHN VORSTER'S TEPID RESPONSE
TO KOORNHOF, OBSERVING THAT "THE LEADERS OF 21 MILLION
BLACK AND BROWN PEOPLE, AN IMPRESSIVE ARRAY OF (ENLIGHTEN-
ED) NATIONALISTS, ALMOST EVERY NATIONALIST NEWSPAPER
EDITOR, THE ENTIRE PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION AND THE OPPOSI-
TION PRESS ALL SAY THAT TIME IS RUNNING OUT."

ANOTHER ENGLISH-LANGUAGE OPPOSITION PAPER, THE ARGUS, FOUND
THE KOORNHOF "POLITICS OF CONCILIATION" TO BE "A TRE-
MENDOUS ADVANCE,...A STIMULATING CONTRAST TO THE CLASSIC
INTERPRETATIONS OF NATIONAL PARTY POLICIES AND WHITE
DOMINATION AND APARTHEID THAT HAVE SO OBVIOUSLY BEEN RUNNING
THE COUNTRY INTO A COMPLETE DEAD END."

DIE VADERLAND, REPRESENTING WHAT'S CALLED THE "ENLIGHTENED"
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WING OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY, NOTED THAT VORSTER DID NOT
REJECT KOORNHOF "IN PRINCIPLE, BUT ONLY BECAUSE OF PRACTI-
CAL REASONS AT PRESENT. THEREWITH HE GAVE THE GREEN LIGHT
FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION, WITHIN THE NATIONAL PARTY, TOO,
ACCORDING TO OUR INTERPRETATION."

THE CONSERVATIVE AFRIKAANS-LANGUAGE DIE BURGER, EVEN WHILE
TUCKING KOORNHOF INTO THE COMFORTING CONTEXT OF OTHER
NATIONS' EFFORTS TO COPE WITH ETHNIC GROUPS, NONETHELESS
CONCLUDED: "THE BEST POLITICAL BRAIN POWER IN SOUTH AFRICA
SHOULD CONCERN ITSELF WITH THE CLEAR IDENTIFICATION AND
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEMS AND A PENETRATING STUDY OF
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS."

IN BRIEF, HERE IS INDICATIVE IF NOT CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE
THAT THE WHILE POLITICAL STRUCTURE, INCLUDING NOT MERELY
FRINGE ELEMENTS OR LEFTISTS BUT A MAN WHOM SOME SPEAK
OF AS THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER, IS 1) TESTING WAYS OF
SHARING POLITICAL POWER AND 2) DOING SO WITH A SENSE OF
URGENCY THAT IS SHARED, ACCORDING TO THE STAR AT LEAST, BY
JUST ABOUT EVERYONE EXCEPT THE FACTION OF THE CURRENT
PRIME MINISTER.

THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE IDEAS UNDER DISCUSSION WILL MATURE FAST OR FULLY ENOUGH INTO OFFICIAL POLICY, OR THAT THE IDEA WILL THEN MEET READY OR EVEN EVENTUAL ACCEPTANCE BY THE NON-WHITE COMMUNITIES, OR THAT THEY WILL MEET THE STANDARDS TO WHICH OUR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE ACCUSTOMED US AMERICANS.

IT IS TO SAY THAT OUR COMMON PICTURE OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICA AS A BENIGHTED COMMUNITY ESSENTIALLY BEYOND SELF-REDEMPTION OUGHT TO BE TEMPERED BY AN AWARENESS OF THE FERMENT THAT, WERE IT TAKING PLACE IN A SOCIETY NOT CLOUDED BY RACIAL CONFLICT, MIGHT BE CONSIDERED POSITIVELY PRE-REVOLUTIONARY. WHAT OTHER RULING ELITE IS PRESENTLY CONTEMPLATING SUCH SWEEPING POLITICAL CHANGE?
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WHAT IT MEANS TO ME IS THAT OUR PERCEPTIONS, AND POLICIES, OUGHT TO TAKE INTO CLOSER ACCOUNT WHILE POLITICS IN SOUTH AFRICA AS WELL AS NON-WHITE PROTEST. THERE MUST BE A WAY TO TELESCOPE THE FIVE OR 10 OR 20 YEARS WE AMERICANS USUALLY NEED TO UNDERSTAND PASSABLY WELL THE COUNTRIES WHOSE FATE WE ARE TEMPTED TO TAKE INTO OUR HANDS.
CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, APARTHEID, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE147703
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: BARUSSELL:MR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770227-0865
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770621/aaaaasoq.tel
Line Count: 144
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 83734977-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2043179
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STEPHEN ROSENFELD ARTICLE ON SOUTH AFRICA - JUNE 24
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, SHUM, SF, US, WASHINGTON POST, (ROSENFELD, STEPHEN)
To: AF POSTS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/83734977-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009